

STATE OF UTAH GENERAL OUTLOOK

April 1, 2009

SUMMARY

March was a roller coaster ride. The month started with a few good storms that heightened some anticipation of a good wet spring and abundant snow. The middle of the month was pretty much the middle of no-where because snow and precipitation were no-where to be found. Warm temperatures brought low and mid elevation snowpacks to isothermal conditions and melting began. Snowpacks across the state started a steep decline with many areas showing declines of 5 to 15%. Then in the final week, a series of storms hit the state and which brought snow levels in northern Utah back to near average conditions. Southern and eastern Utah improved but not as much as the north. Snowpacks across the state now range from 77% over southeastern Utah to 100% on the Weber. March precipitation was below to above normal (77%-118%) in northern Utah and much below to below normal (35%-83%) in the south which brings the year to date precipitation to near normal in across the state. Current soil moisture saturation levels in runoff producing areas are: Bear – 65%, Weber – 64%, Provo – 54%, Uintah Basin – 46%, SE Utah – 54%, Sevier – 58% and SW Utah – 60%, up 10 to 20% from last month. Dryer soils typically mean less runoff from snowmelt. Reservoir storage is currently at 66% of capacity statewide compared to 60% last year. General water supply conditions are near average in northern Utah, and the Virgin and near to much below average in central and southeastern Utah. Streamflow forecasts range from 53% for the Bear River at Stewart Dam to 115% of average on the Beaver River nr beaver. Surface Water Supply Indices range from 12% on the Bear River to 57% for the Virgin. The extremely low value for the Bear River is a reflection of Bear Lake storage which continues to be well below normal.

SNOWPACK

April first snowpacks as measured by the NRCS SNOTEL system are as follows: Bear - 94%, Weber - 100%, Provo - 96%, Uintahs - 80%, southeast Utah - 77%, Sevier - 87%, southwest Utah - 83% and the statewide figure is 91% of average. April is the typical peak of snowpack and the beginning of runoff season. Future climate can still impact snow and runoff with dry conditions diminishing runoff and wet conditions enhancing it. The area with lowest snowpack average is the east fork of the Sevier at 63%.

PRECIPITATION

Mountain precipitation during March was: Bear – 118%, Weber – 114%, Provo – 100%, Uintahs – 77%, SE Utah – 78%, Sevier – 83%, SW Utah – 35% and the statewide figure is 95% of average. This brings the seasonal accumulation (Oct-Mar) to 99% of average statewide.

RESERVOIRS

Storage in 41 of Utah's key irrigation reservoirs is at 66% of capacity up 6% compared to April of last year year. Most reservoirs in Utah should easily fill this runoff season. A notable exception is Bear Lake. All reservoirs with previous fill restrictions are now able to store, including Willard Bay.

STREAMFLOW

Snowmelt streamflows are expected to have a wide range from much below average to above average across the state of Utah this year. Forecast streamflows range from 32% on South Creek nr Monticello to 115% on the Beaver River nr Beaver. Most flows are forecast to be in the 80% to 105% range.

